

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The neighborhoods that abound Upper Wisconsin Avenue are treasured assets of the District of Columbia - beautiful, well-maintained homes front tree-lined streets. In addition to being a major transportation corridor, Upper Wisconsin Avenue is an active commercial and employment district - a street where people go to shop and work. With concerns of development encroaching on its neighborhoods and a desire to improve the appearance and future viability of the Avenue, there was a need to study the Corridor and develop a plan for its future prosperity.

The Office of Planning takes seriously its role in preserving and enhancing the quality of life for the people living in the neighborhoods around Upper Wisconsin Avenue and first and foremost, in developing the Strategic Framework Plan, was the desire to ensure that the quality of life is not diminished here, but rather only further enhanced. To that end, a major goal of this

Study was to identify a strategy to achieve walkable, livable, compact communities near transit stations, using the principles of Transit-Oriented Development, while protecting and enhancing the neighborhoods off the Corridor.

The Study

The Upper Wisconsin Avenue Corridor Study (UWACS) was born out of a need to address the lack of neighborhood-serving retail in the Friendship Heights and Tenleytown commercial areas. The Study was also a response to citizen concerns with the random development that was occurring in their residential neighborhoods. The community assisted the Office of Planning in defining the scope of the project. A four-day charrette and several focus group meetings were held to gather input from the community in early 2003. These outreach efforts helped the Office of Planning define the vision for the Corridor. In the fall of 2003, the draft UWACS Strategic Framework

Plan was completed and presented to the community at two public meetings. After a 90-day public review and comment period, comments that were received by the Office of Planning were reviewed and, with advice from an advisory steering committee, the Plan was revised. Following review by the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs), the revised Plan will be submitted to the DC Council for approval as a small area plan. If approved, the UWACS Plan would become supplement to the Comprehensive Plan and provide guidance for future planning along Upper Wisconsin Avenue.

Benefits of the Plan

The UWACS Strategic Framework Plan provides recommendations on how to preserve the existing assets along Wisconsin Avenue, guide future development opportunities, encourage a better mix of uses and create a sense of place. The Plan proposes no increases in the heights currently permitted along

the Avenue, other than at the blocks tightly clustered around the Friendship Heights MetroRail Station. The Plan also lays out the process that potential new developments should follow to ensure coordination among elected neighborhood representatives and the community.

The Strategic Framework Plan defines the boundaries where the District Government strongly encourages additional housing and where growth should be restricted to protect established neighborhoods and preserve their character. The Plan looks at ways to encourage more ground-floor retail, especially in areas of close proximity to transit stations, provides basic design guidelines for the appearance of these shops and identifies ways that the Corridor can retain the existing businesses while still attracting new ones.

Details of the Plan

The market study that was prepared as part of this planning effort projects a demand for 325,000 to 450,000 square feet of office space, 1,500 to 1,800 residential units and 112,000 to 277,000 square feet of retail development over the next five to ten years. The Plan recommends how this development should be managed; how to ensure predictability as it relates to land use, building height and density; how to attract diverse retail uses; and, how to improve the appearance of the streetscape and public realm. The Strategic Framework Plan's policy recommendations are organized under four primary themes:

- 1. Managing Growth;
- 2. Protecting Neighborhoods;
- 3. Encouraging a Greater Retail Mix; and
- 4. Creating an Attractive Streetscape and Improved Public Realm.

The overall concept for the Corridor is to protect neighborhoods from development pressure by focusing growth along the corridor and specifically, at the transit stations. Concentration of new development at the stations will provide the critical mass needed to support improved retail, housing and public amenities. In addition, concentration of uses at the transit station will reduce traffic congestion by optimizing previous public investment in the transit infrastructure. Therefore, the Strategic Framework Plan encourages concentrated development at the MetroRail stations with transition away from the stations along the length of the corridor and into the neighborhoods.

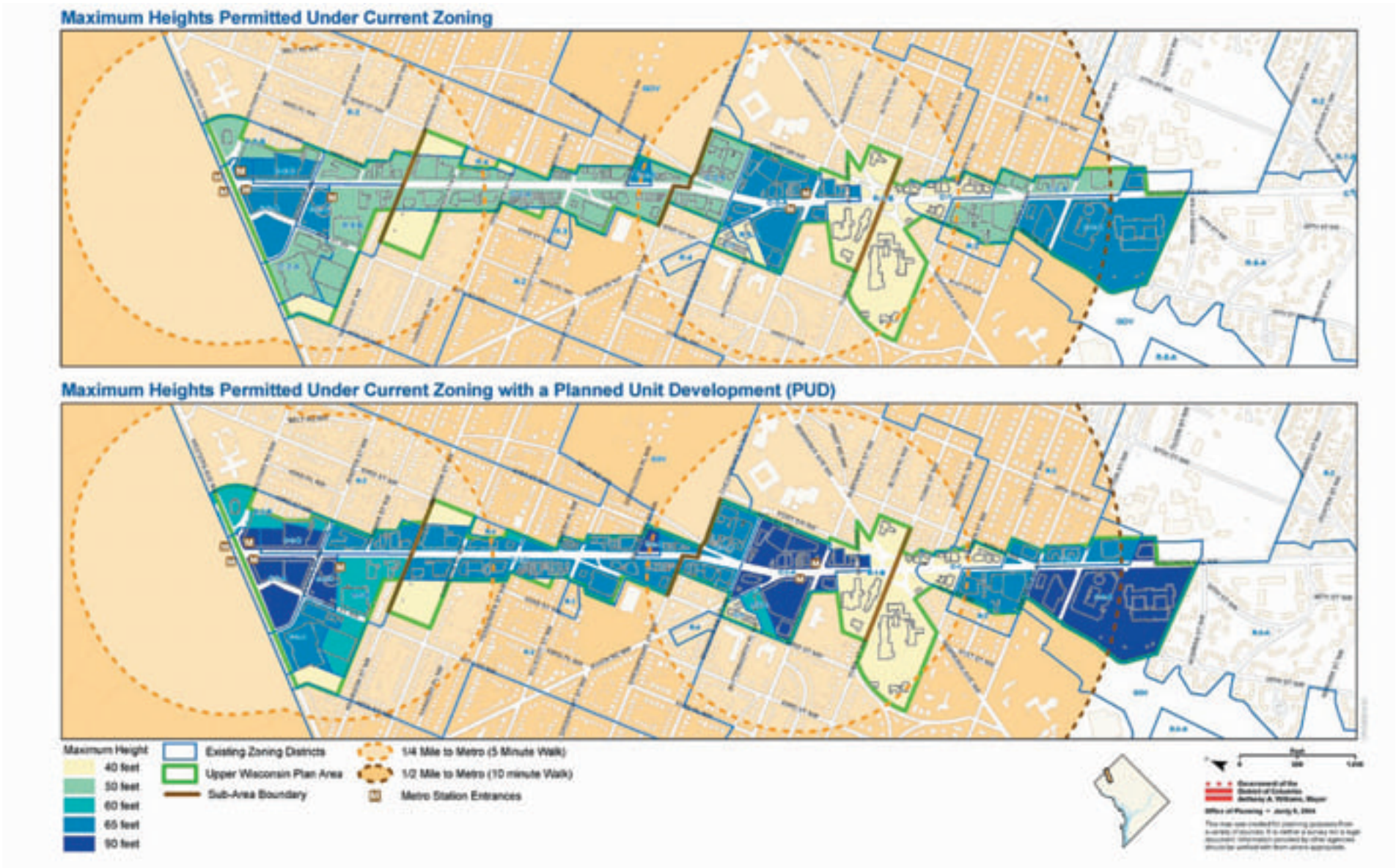
The current zoning focuses commercial and higher density residential development on the corridor and, for the most part, limits the areas off the corridor to low-density residential development (see accompanying maps). The existing general pattern fits with the design concept recommended by this Plan with the exception of Friendship Heights. At Friendship Heights, the Plan acknowledges the special vision that the Comprehensive Plan has for it as a

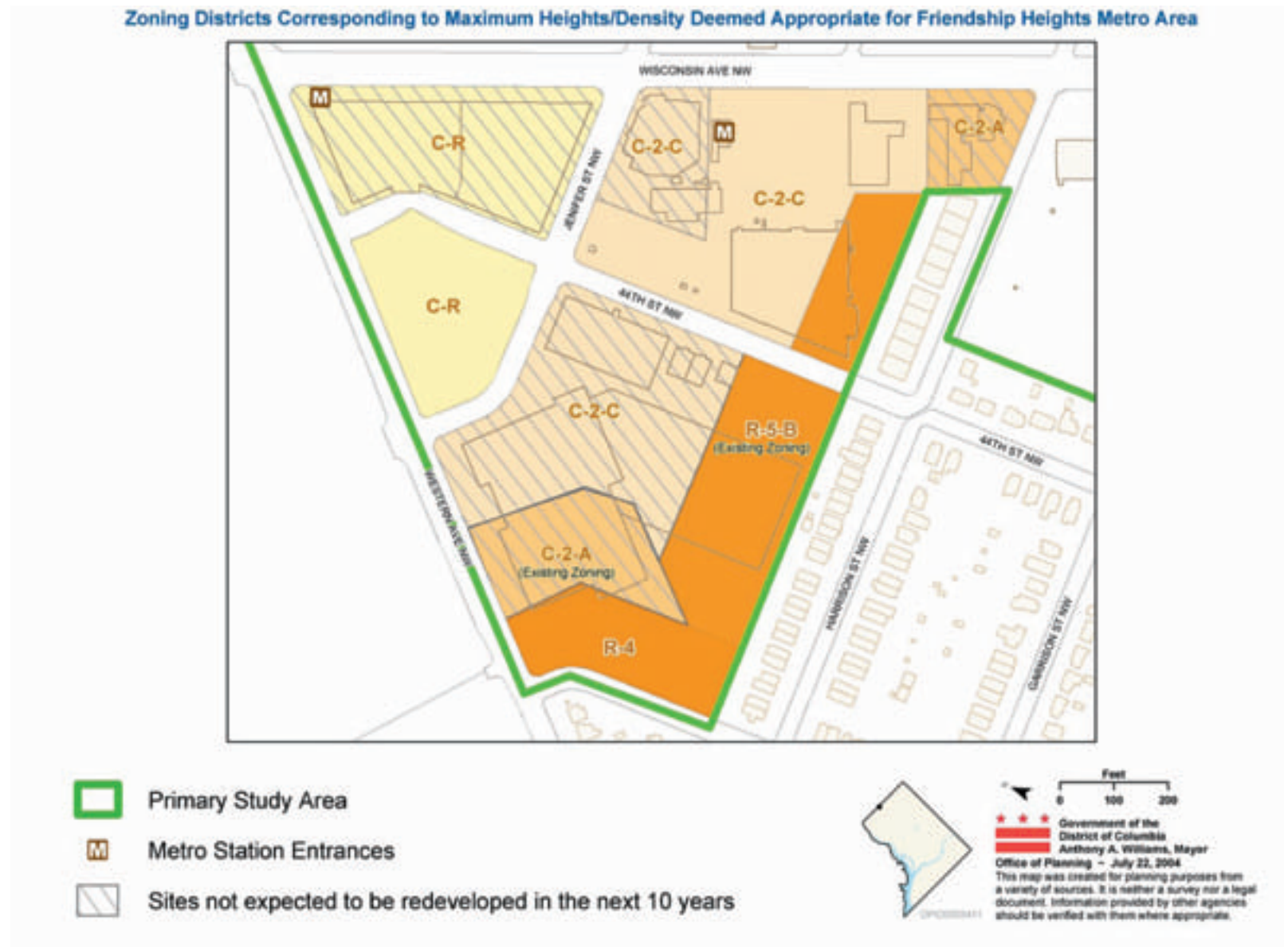
“regional center” and Housing Opportunity Area. The Strategic Framework Plan recommends that the current zoning should be better tailored to what is envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan and that it is appropriate to encourage greater height and density than is permitted by current zoning - as long as these increases are accompanied by greater benefits for the community under the planned unit development (PUD) process, and as long as the development is appropriately buffered from the surrounding nearby neighborhood. The Zoning Commission hears and decides requests for approval of PUDs. The accompanying map of Friendship Heights identifies

potential zoning districts for individual parcels in this area, which is roughly bounded by Wisconsin Avenue to the east, Western Avenue to the north, 45th Street to the west and the rear of the Lord and Taylor department store and WMATA bus garage to the south.

The following potential zoning districts are provided in response to citizen requests for more specificity about the densities as well as the heights that the Plan is recommending. They are illustrative only, to indicate the heights and densities which the Plan finds to be appropriate for the area, provided that they

are subject to the kind of detailed design and impact review, and the proffering of public benefits, that are part of the planned unit development (PUD) process. Therefore, the Office of Planning is not proposing to initiate these zoning changes; rather, zoning changes should be initiated by the landowner in the form of a PUD and PUD related map changes. The potential new zoning districts include R-4 at 45th Street; C-2-C at the Lord and Taylor department store site; CR at Mazza Gallerie and the adjacent parking lot and C-2-C for most of the block fronting on Wisconsin Avenue at Jenifer and 44th Streets. These new zones provide a residential buffer (R-4 and existing R-5-B) between the





single-family neighborhood and the commercial core of Friendship Heights. The most intensive commercial zone (CR) is directly across from high-density development in Friendship Heights, Maryland and completely buffered from the residential uses on the District side by less intensive commercial zones.

The Plan also recommends downsizing the scale of what is permitted to be developed in the blocks between Fessenden and Ellicott Streets to protect the small-town feel of the existing shops there. The Office of Planning would look into initiating a zoning change here from C-2-A to C-1. For the rest of the Corridor,

the Office of Planning does not recommend any changes in what is permitted by the current zoning.

The Office of Planning will explore the feasibility of an overlay zone that would encourage ground-floor retail uses within some of the commercially zoned parts of the Corridor. An overlay may also identify use standards or preferred uses and provide incentives such as bonus density for those uses. The Plan outlines the public process that should be followed for proposed planned unit developments (PUDs) that guarantees involvement of “affected” Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and the community and

provides developers with a general list of desired public needs that can be addressed by potential new projects as amenities to the community to offset requests for greater height and density.

Rising home prices in the District have only exacerbated the affordable housing problem that already exists in the City. In Ward 3, the lack of affordable housing options is especially acute. One option available to homeowners that can assist with this problem is the use of accessory apartments. The Office of Planning will investigate a revision to the zoning regulations that would allow garage space to be converted for accessory apartment use in homes

that cannot create an apartment through internal conversion due to size constraints or configuration of the house.

The Strategic Framework Plan builds on the foundation laid out in the District Government’s Comprehensive Plan for the City by defining the boundaries of the Housing Opportunity Areas at Friendship Heights and Tenleytown where a greater density of housing is encouraged. The Plan also provides better protection to encroaching development in the neighborhoods with the designation of a Growth Restriction Area in which the Office of Planning will not support zoning changes or PUD applications there nor would they allow conversion of institutional uses to non-matter-of-right zoning uses.

Finally, the market study showed that there is demand along the Corridor for additional retail. To ensure and encourage a better mix, the Plan recommends that the Tenleytown businesses form a merchant’s association similar to the one in Friendship Heights (Chevy Chase Shopping District Association) and that both commercial areas may want to pursue the creation of a business improvement district (BID) and/or apply for Main Street designation. With assistance from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development reSTORE DC office, these groups can put forward a coordinated effort to support the retention, expansion and attraction of retail stores along Upper Wisconsin Avenue.

Next Steps and Implementation of the Plan

With the exception of transportation, the information that has been received from other public agencies with regards to capacity is sufficient to convince the Office of Planning that the existing infrastructure is adequate to support the Plan’s recommendations. The District also has an ongoing Facilities Management Program and Capital Budgeting process that require all District agencies to monitor conditions and make adjustments as necessary to meet the demands of its residents.

In response to this Plan, the District Department of Transportation is initiating a transportation study of the remaining portion of the Corridor (from Fessenden

UWACS Action Plan

Actions / Recommendations	Next Steps / Implementation
Managing Growth	The District Council will take action on the UWACS Strategic Framework Plan as a small area plan after review by the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions in the Study Area.
	In Friendship Heights, the Office of Planning (OP) is not proposing to initiate zoning changes; rather, zoning changes should be initiated by the landowner in the form of a planned unit development (PUD) and PUD related map changes.
	OP will investigate whether to initiate a zoning change for the Ellicott to Fessenden block from C-2-A to C-1. For the rest of the Corridor, the Office of Planning does not recommend any changes in what is permitted by the current zoning.
	OP will use the UWACS Strategic Framework Plan as a guide in reviewing development proposals (PUDs).
	OP will encourage higher density residential development in the Housing Opportunity Areas.
	OP will investigate a revision to the Zoning Regulations that would allow garage space to be converted for accessory apartment use in homes that cannot create an apartment through internal conversion due to size constraints or configuration of the house.
Protecting Neighborhoods	OP will not support zoning changes or PUD applications within the Growth Restriction Area.
	OP will not support conversion to other uses, which are not matter of right, particularly at a higher density in the Growth Restriction Area.
Encouraging a Greater Retail Mix	OP will explore the feasibility of an overlay zone that would encourage ground-floor retail uses within some of the commercially zoned parts of the Corridor.
	OP will coordinate with reSTORE DC on efforts to improve the retail environment of the Corridor (Tenleytown Merchant's Association, Corridor BID, and/or Main Street).
Creating an Attractive Streetscape and Improved Public Realm	The UWACS Strategic Framework Plan outlines basic design guidelines that OP will use in developing a Retail Overlay Zone and will consult when reviewing development proposals (PUDs). In addition, a Main Street Program and/or a BID can further develop these guidelines and work with building owners and tenants on implementation.
	OP will work with the private sector on improving the streetscape in a more coordinated manner when reviewing future development proposals (PUDs), but a Main Street Program and/or a BID can develop streetscape guidelines and work with building owners and tenants on implementation.
	OP will coordinate with the National Park Service and the District Department of Parks and Recreation on future improvements to parkland along the Corridor, i.e., Fort Reno Park, triangle parks, etc. As part of the PUD process, OP will encourage the creation of new greenspaces, where possible, when parcels are redeveloped by the private sector.
	OP's Historic Preservation Division will work with the Tenleytown Historical Society and others on possible designation of historic buildings and districts along the Corridor.
	OP's Historic Preservation Division will work with the Tenleytown Historical Society and others on creating a series of historic markers, funding for which could be provided by the private sector as a public benefit for a future development proposal (PUD).

Street on the north, to Rodman Street on the south) to complement the Friendship Heights Transportation Study. The DDOT study will investigate transportation management improvements in the Upper Wisconsin Avenue Corridor Area similar to the Friendship Heights Transportation Study and should be completed in early summer of 2005. In addition, all new development proposals, including PUDs, must include on-site parking for their proposed uses per zoning regulations. It should be noted that the adequacy of parking is an important factor in informing the evaluation of future

development proposals. PUD's also must commission their own traffic analyses; they must convince the Zoning Commission that the proposed project will not cause adverse impacts, and will provide greater benefits than what could be achieved under existing zoning.

In summary, the recommendations prescribed in the Upper Wisconsin Avenue Corridor Study - Strategic Framework Plan build on the principles of Transit-Oriented Development to create more places for people to live, work, shop, dine and play along Upper Wisconsin Avenue - making a great street even better.

